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TO THE MOTHER OF A POET

BY SARA TEASDALE

SHE is too kind, I think, for mortal things,
Too gentle for the gusty ways of earth;
God gave to her a shy and silver mirth,
And made her soul as clear
And softly singing as an orchard spring's
In sheltered hollows all the sunny year—
A spring that through the leaning grass looks up
And holds all heaven in its crystal cup,
Mirror to holy meadows high and blue
With stars like drops of dew.

I love to think that never tears at night
Have made her eyes less bright;
That all her girlhood through
Never a cry of love made over-tense
Her voice's innocence;
That in her hands have lain
Flowers beaten by the rain,
And little birds, before they learned to sing,
Drowned in the sudden ecstasy of Spring.

I love to think that with a wistful wonder
She held her baby warm against her breast;
That never any fear awoke whereunder
She shuddered at her gift, or trembled lest
Through the great doors of birth
Here to a windy earth
She lured from heaven a half-unwilling guest.

She caught and kept his first vague flickering smile,
The faint upleaping of his spirit's fire;
And for a long sweet while
In her was all he asked of earth or heaven.
But in the end how far,
Past every shaken star,
Should leap at last that arrow-like desire,
His full-grown manhood's keen
Ardor toward the unseen
Dark mystery beyond the Pleiads seven.

And in her heart she heard
His first dim-spoken word;
She only of them all could understand,
Flushing to feel at last
The silence over-past,
Thrilling as though her hand had touched God's hand.
But in the end how many words
Winged on a flight she could not follow,
Farther than skyward lark or swallow,
His lips set free to lands she never knew;
Braver than white sea-faring birds
With a fearless melody,
Flying over a shining sea,
A star-white song between the blue and blue.

Oh, I have seen a lake as clear and fair
As it were molten air,
Lifting a lily upward to the sun.
How should the water know the glowing heart
That ever to the heaven lifts its fire,
A golden and unchangeable desire?
The water only knows
The faint and rosy glows
Of under-petals, opening apart.
Yet in the soul of earth,
Deep in the primal ground,
Its searching roots are wound,
And centuries have struggled toward its birth.

So, in the man who sings,
All of the voiceless horde
From the cold dawn of things
Have their reward;
All in whose pulses ran
Blood that is his at last,
From the first stooping man
Far in the winnowed past.
Out of the tumult of their love and mating
Each one created, seeing life was good—
Dumb, till at last the song that they were waiting
Breaks like brave April thro' a wintry wood.

But what of her whose heart is troubled by it,
The mother who would soothe and set him free,
Fearing the song's storm-shaken ecstasy?—
Oh, as the moon that has no power to quiet
The strong wind-driven sea!

SARA TEASDALE.